

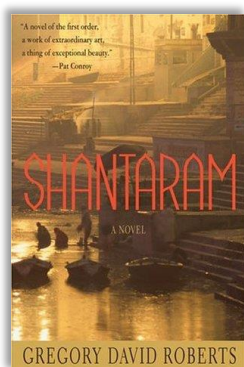


# Queanbeyan Reading Circle

## Newsletter February 2017

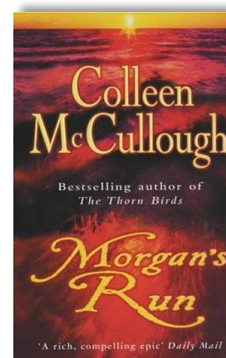
Welcome back everyone. It was good to see so many of you after our long summer break.

So big books! What a challenge! Quite a few of you took up the challenge.



Lyn started things of and she tackled the big book theme, reading ***Shantaram by Gregory David Roberts***; the paperback edition comes in at 936 pages. This first novel set in the underworld of modern-day Bombay is narrated by Lin, an escaped prisoner with a false passport who flees prison in Australia for the crowded streets of a city where he can disappear. Accompanied by his friend, Prabaker, the two enter Bombay's hidden society of beggars, gangsters, prostitutes, holy men, soldiers and exiles from other countries, who search for what they cannot find elsewhere. Linda enjoyed this part fiction, part true life account. She found it interesting especially the portion about travelling on the train, having travelled in India previously. This novel appears to be a love/hate book. Many readers adore it while others seem to loathe it. To demonstrate this I have included two quotes from Goodreads "Whew! This whirlwind of a book was a reader's feast.", and "My god. What an incredible load of drivel this is." Perhaps you might like to try it and see which camp you fall into!

At over 800 pages ***Colleen McCullough's Morgan's Run*** qualifies as a big book. Elizabeth enjoyed this book which centres on Richard Morgan, son of a Bristol tavern-keeper, devoted husband and loving father. As a result of the idiosyncrasies of the 18th-century English court system, he is consigned as a convict to the famous First Fleet. At the novels start, Richard Morgan is a contented man, then bit by bit his life crumbles. He endures imprisonment and then the horrors of the journey to Botany Bay and Norfolk Island where against all odds he makes a new life. Richard Morgan's story is true and through McCullough's extensive research she presents an engrossing work.



**McCullough studied medicine at University of Sydney then went on to a research post at Yale medical school, before switching to neurophysiology as a result of a skin condition that prevented direct contact with patients.**

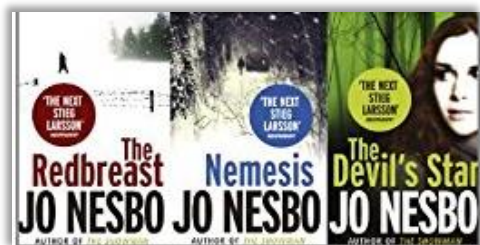
Marie tackled two memoirs this month, ***Clive James' Unreliable Memoirs*** and the recently published ***Working Class Boy by Jimmy Barnes***. Marie didn't finish Clive James' offering, she enjoyed the parts about his early life in Sydney, but felt the book got boring, and James thinks a lot of himself. She did

however thoroughly enjoy Working Class Boy. This book has all the elements of a misery memoir – drug abuse, domestic violence, alcoholism, etc., however it is more than that – story of a young man longing to escape. Ultimately the overall impression is one of what a resilient man! Definitely recommended.

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*Les Miserables* certainly qualifies as a big book. Linda tackled this monster and found in very enjoyable, she even got a little emotional. Linda is currently reading with an African feel. She enjoyed *The Sheltering Desert* by Henno Martin, which is the story of two German geologists, Henno

Martin and Hermann Korn, who risk internment during WWII. To avoid this they seek refuge in the Namib Desert for 2 ½ years, living off the land during that time. A lesson in survival but also a learning experience about themselves and their capabilities. Her second African themed selection was *Colour Bar: The Triumph of Seretse Khama and His Nation* by Susan Williams. Seretse Khama was heir apparent to the kingship of the Bangwato people and the first President of Botswana. This book relates his life in Botswana and his exile in England after being banned from his country for marrying a white English woman. Linda is currently half way through this book but enjoying it so far.

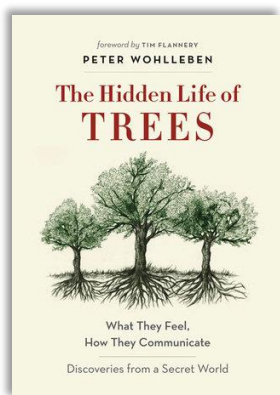


We will accept Megan’s reading of the first 3 novels in the series known as The Oslo Sequence by *Jo Nesbo* as a big book, because they were all in one volume. The first three in the series are *The Redbreast, Nemesis and The Devil’s Star*. These books by Norwegian author Nesbo have all been translated in English and follow the exploits of Oslo detective Harry Hole (pronounced Hahree Whoule in Norway). Hole is a classic loose cannon in the

Oslo police force, with unorthodox methods. Some very unusual plot twists and even though the books have been translated from Norwegian they flow very well. Nesbo has become one of Scandinavian crime writings shining lights.

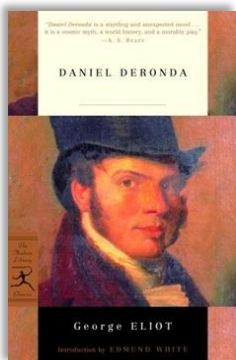
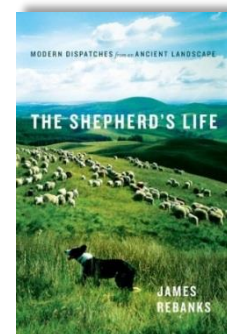
*The Penguin Century of Australian Stories* is a compilation of one hundred different stories, from Australian writers ranging from turn-of-the-century writers like Henry Lawson through to contemporary writers like Tim Winton, Peter Carey and Elliott Perlman. It’s a book you can dip into, some of the stories are fiction while others are non-fiction. Vanessa has found the stories very interesting and has found the

experience really enjoyable. Since we last met Vanessa has also read *The Hidden Life of Trees: What They Feel, How They Communicate—Discoveries From a Secret World* by Peter Wohlleben. Wohlleben shares his love of woods and forests and explains the amazing processes of life, death, and regeneration he has observed in the woods and the scientific processes behind these wonders. Vanessa found this book fascinating and thoroughly enjoyed it. The library holds a copy for anyone who is interested.



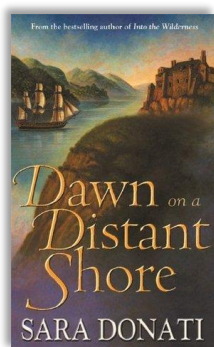
Knocking on wood for good luck originated from primitive tree worship when rapping on trees was believed to summon protective spirits in the trees.

Christine didn't have time to tackle a big read, being on grandparent duties, but she has started *A Shepherd's Life by James Rebanks*. Rebanks gives insight into how it feels to be part of an environment fashioned by complex relationships between farms, flocks, and families. So far Christine is enjoying it.



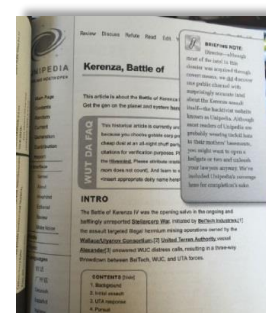
At 847 pages *George Eliot's Daniel Deronda* qualifies as a big book. Whilst a classic and often on many of the lists of must read books Maria took a long time to read this. The novel follows the intertwining lives of the beautiful but spoiled and selfish Gwendolen and the selfless Daniel Deronda, a young man of unknown parentage. Gwendolen is attempting to escape a loveless marriage but Deronda is deeply affected by the discovery of his Jewish ancestry. A challenging read but Maria persevered, even though she couldn't stand Gwendolen as a character.

To wrap things up Emma and I both overachieved this month reading 2 big books a piece. Emma read *Dawn on a Distant Shore by Sara Donati*. This is the 2<sup>nd</sup> in the Into the Wilderness series. This series takes us into the heart of a forbidden affair between an unconventional Englishwoman and an American frontiersman. Elizabeth Middleton leaves her comfortable English estate to join her family in a remote New York mountain village. The series begins in 1792, however Dawn on a Distant Shore takes place in the winter of 1794, and continues the story of Elizabeth and Nathaniel. I can't say much more without giving away details from the first book. For those who love historical fiction where by the end you will feel like you are reading about people you know, then this series is for you.

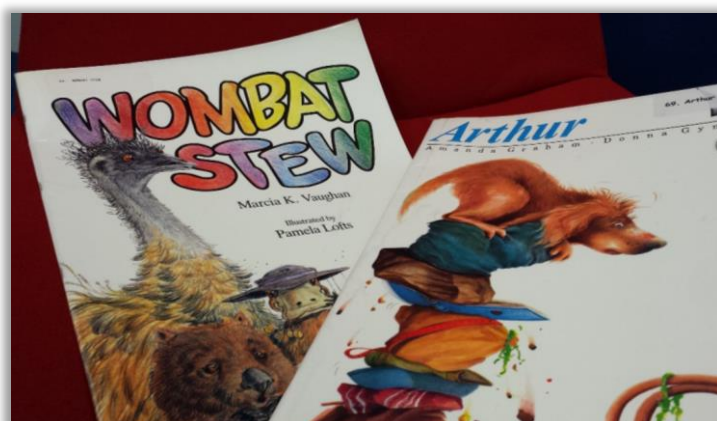


I tackled a young adult novel called *Illuminae by Amie Kaufman*. This book has 599 pages, meeting the big book criteria, but I read it to try its unique format. The story is told

through a collection of interview transcripts, diary entries, emails and space images. The year is 2575, and two rival corporations are at war over a planet at the edge of the universe. With enemy firing on them, Kady and Ezra—who have just ended their relationship—are forced to fight their way onto an evacuating fleet, with an enemy warship in pursuit, and thus begins a teen sci-fi adventure. It was an interesting format which may appeal to some reluctant teen readers but I felt it was too long. Interestingly my teenage daughter commented that she felt although it was an interesting concept she felt reluctant readers would be put off by the size of the novel.



Our final two big books really were big books! We certainly had everyone intrigued as to what we had read. One guess for my book was Mao's Last Dancer, however we read.....





On that note....that's all folks.

Don't forget **February 14<sup>th</sup>** is Library Lovers Day, so if you are in the library don't forget to fill in a catalogue card telling us why you love the library for our display.

## Books discussed

*A Shepherd's Life* by James Rebanks

*Colour Bar: The Triumph of Seretse Khama and His Nation* by Susan Williams

*Daniel Deronda* by George Eliot

*Dawn on a Distant Shore* by Sara Donati

*Illuminae* by Amie Kaufman

*Les Misérables* by Victor Hugo

*Morgan's Run* by Colleen McCullough

*Shantaram* by Gregory David Roberts

*The Hidden Life of Trees: What They Feel, How They Communicate—Discoveries From a Secret World* by Peter Wohlleben

*The Penguin Century of Australian Stories*

*The Redbreast, Nemesis and The Devil's Star* by Jo Nesbo

*The Sheltering Desert* by Henno Martin

*Unreliable Memoirs* by Clive James

*Working Class Boy* by Jimmy Barnes

